

nature and convention.

Whether that idealism deserves serious consideration is a question which a reader might ponder after he has fully understood Tolstoy's argument in "Posle bala" and other stories. Zholkovsky has pointed the way toward such an understanding. Both the reading of "Posle bala" and Zholkovsky's reflections on Tolstoy's place in Russian literature and culture are valuable contributions to Tolstoy scholarship.

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Peter Ulf Møller, Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata. Tolstoj and the debate on sexual morality in Russian literature of the 1890s. Trans. from Danish by John Kendal. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988.

Because of its semi-pornographic nature, the Kreutzer Sonata had a unique reception in Russia, becoming simultaneously the first example of both samizdat and tamizdat literature. The "sex question" of the late 19th century manifested itself in eroticism and decadence in the arts, and in evolving socio-political attitudes on women's liberation, including a radical rejection of marriage by thinkers and authors as different as Hardy, Rossetti and Tolstoy. The particular value of this study, which takes as its starting point the social and literary response to the Kreutzer Sonata, is its comprehensive, thoroughly documented and generously illustrated narrative of the shift in public attitudes provoked by Tolstoy's attack on romantic love and marriage.

Essentially a reception study, this book traces the impact of the Kreutzer Sonata on the Russian intelligentsia from the private arena of Sofja Tolstja's repressed hostility and ambivalence while transcribing the manuscript and wrestling with the censorship to the general shock and perturbation of the public. The audience response is made audible in this book through substantial quotations from Tolstoy's voluminous correspondence on the topic, and through detailed descriptions of the gatherings where the manuscript was privately read, discussed, transcribed and circulated.

On one notable occasion, Tolstoy himself read the Kreutzer Sonata aloud to a select group of friends, but only after the women had been asked to leave the room! While gender considerations do not motivate this study (Møller states in the Introduction that "my book is not about sexual morality"), these issues are unavoidable when exploring readers' responses. Møller acknowledges, for example, the difference in male and female responses to the "sexual question" in general and to the Kreutzer Sonata in particular. His survey of the letters Tolstoy received suggests that, on the whole, women readers responded to the work more favorably than men, and expressed greater concern over the problem of sexual morality, a gender-based sensitivity Tolstoy himself acknowledged in his diaries and letters.

Møller identifies three trends in the turn of the century debate on sexual morality: the "morality of the 1860s," the "glove" morality (so named after Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's play A Glove, which attacked the sexual double standard), and Christian sexual morality, the latter problematized by a dispute over clerical readings of Scripture. The continuing debate in Russian letters is addressed both as an echo of the Tolstoyan controversy and as an aspect of Symbolist thought on marriage, sexuality, and the body in the writings of Soloviev, Gippius, Merezhkovsky, and Rozanov. A unique feature of the study is the author's familiarity with Scandinavian debates on sexual morality which influenced and were influenced by Russian sources.

In the opening chapters, Møller establishes the thematics of the Kreutzer Sonata as treated in a literary style consistent with Tolstoy's emergent aesthetic theory. Møller thus establishes a unity in pre- and post-conversion Tolstoyan aesthetics, but has then to account for the radical shift in Tolstoy's attitudes on the "women question" from the conservative views he expressed in his essays of the 80s ("an ideal woman would not say it was enough after two, or after 20 births," What, The, Must We Do?) to the apparent affinities with radical feminism projected in the Kreutzer Sonata. Møller convincingly argues that the Kreutzer Sonata served as a vehicle for the personal clarification of these issues in Tolstoyan thought, although he is careful to sustain the reader's awareness of the ironic distance between Pozdnyshev's narrative and Tolstoy's authorship. Drawing on various statements from Tolstoy's letters and diaries, Møller solicits greater recognition of Tolstoy's belief in sexual continence, an aspect of Tolstoyanism that has frequently been downplayed in the criticism as an eccentricity.

The second and third chapters outline the history of censorship and the illegal dissemination of the tale, a narrative that allows Møller to introduce Sofja Andreevna in her role as editor of the collected works (the Kreutzer Sonata was to have appeared in volume 13) and as a player in the drama of marital friction which unquestionably contributed to Tolstoy's attitudes on marriage. One of the most intriguing aspects of this study is the chapter on the "counter literature," where Møller describes Sofja Andreevna's own version of the Kreutzer Sonata, "Who is to Blame?" which, together with her son Lev's version, "Chopin's Prelude," number the first two works of the "counter-literature." Other examples include a variety of polemical re-writings of the Kreutzer Sonata from various points of view, for example: "The Violinist's Kreutzer Sonata. Trukachevsky's Notes" and "Her Kreutzer Sonata. From Mrs. Pozdnyshev's Diary" both supply the missing voices of Pozdnyshev's narrative. More serious responses came from the pens of Leskov and, of course, Chekhov, whose writings on the problem of the relations between the sexes receive an entire chapter in Møller's study.

The central chapters on the debate over sexual morality in the context of the Kreutzer Sonata are the heart of the book. Møller proposes that Tolstoy's role in the debate was that of liberator-

provocateur: subjects which were previously taboo now became legitimate topics of discussion which could be debated in mixed company. Despite the fact of the official suppression of the tale because of its pornographic nature, most members of the intelligentsia became acquainted with the contents of the tale through the attacks levelled against it; one such unintentionally revealing critique came from the clergyman, Nikanor, who voiced the Church's concern that Tolstoy had misunderstood Christian doctrine, and quoted "the wrong Biblical passages." Because of the questions raised in the debate about Russian Orthodox interpretations of Christ's teaching on love and marriage, the debate continued to be meaningful in Symbolist thought of the following decade. Furthermore, the decadent celebration of the body can be read as a direct reaction against Tolstoyan asceticism.

The three concluding chapters form a separate section of the book on the place of love, the body, and sexuality in Symbolist thought. This topic could occupy an entire book in its own right, and if there is a weakness in Møller's study, it is the confinement of what could be said about Symbolist views on the body and sexuality to observations resonant to the Kreutzer Sonata. The weakest of the three chapters is the discussion of Gippius, which never rises beyond plot summaries and the citation of her famous line, "I want that which is not in this world." Despite the complexity of Gippius' oeuvre and the wealth of biographical and documentary materials on the problem of beauty and the body for Gippius, Møller unaccountably argues, "it was more Merezhkovsky's province to ponder where beauty and the love of life had disappeared during the course of history." The section on Merezhkovsky which follows pays ample tribute to the critic's distinction between "flesh" and "spirit" and is, in every way, an exemplary discussion of aesthetics in theory and practice. While it is true that Merezhkovsky penned more works directed at the "sexual question" ("our new question above all others") and Tolstoyan asceticism, Møller's skill at utilizing documentary genres and belles-lettres failed him in the case of Gippius. Briusov is similarly condensed into a three-page discussion.

The chapter on Soloviev rightly introduces philosophical sources from Plato to Gnosticism to explicate Soloviev's views of love. Yet, surely these sources were important for Tolstoy as well? The philosophical contextualization of Soloviev's principles of the Eternal Feminine alert the reader to an absence of an enriched discussion of these problems throughout the book. Ultimately, the pairing of Soloviev with Tolstoy in this chapter reduces the complexity of Tolstoy's views to the ideas in the Kreutzer Sonata as a solitary response to the New Testament; thus Tolstoy's thought is deprived of the philosophical context which Møller reserves exclusively for Soloviev.

The concluding chapter on Rozanov summarizes his belief in "immortality in genitalibus" in a surprisingly uncritical fashion. While it is fascinating to observe the late nineteenth century turn toward asceticism and the decadent return to a celebration of the body, the implications of an evolving morality in a secularized, pre-

Revolutionary culture are only hinted at by Møller: "[this] theme arises as a protest against the Kreutzer Sonata and its doctrine of chastity [and] continues into a period in which the raising of sexual morality was not nearly as topical as the question of sexual liberation without any kind of religious justification."

With the exception of the final chapters, Møller's study is an exemplary account of a unique case in literary reception. This is truly an illustrated history of the Kreutzer Sonata: the book is generously illustrated with reproductions of rare photographs and paintings, for example, one of Masiutin's unpublished woodblock illustrations for the Kreutzer Sonata; cartoons referring to the debate, such as the dialogue at the piano: "Play the Kreutzer Sonata for me." "No, wait! We're not even married yet!" The translation is graceful for the most part, but the translator apparently does not know Russian and did not bother to familiarize himself with standard English translations of Russian works. The double indemnity of a twice-translated title resulted in such infelicitous renderings as "Why do People Drug Their Senses?" or "What Should We Then Do?" rather than the more usual "Why Do People Stupify Themselves" or "What, the, Must We Do?" The translation worsens progressively with the greatest proportion of howlers and non-grammatical expressions in the final chapters.

Despite its deceptively narrow focus, Møller's study deftly avoids most of the traps of literary historical accounts. It achieves an exemplary balance of evocative detail, literary criticism and intellectual history.

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Forthcoming

Michael Katz (University of Texas, Austin) has sent word that he is editing a Norton Critical Edition of Tolstoy's Short Fiction, and he has supplied the following Table of Contents:

Preface

THE TEXTS: Sevastopol in December
 Sevastopol in May
 Three Deaths
 Family Happiness
 God Sees the Truth, But Waits
 The Death of Ivan Ilych
 The Three Hermits
 The Kreutzer Sonata
 Master and Man
 Alyosha the Pot